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FORGOTTEN LESSONS:
SELECTED ESSAYS OF JOHN T. FLYNN
Edited by Gregory P. Pavlik
Foundation for Economic Education, 1996, vii + 199 pp.

John T. Flynn is best known today as a once-liberal columnist for the *New Republic* who became a bitter enemy of Franklin Roosevelt and a stalwart of the Old Right. The present collection of brilliant essays, ably edited and introduced by Gregory Pavlik of the Foundation for Economic Education, makes clear that Flynn has been much underrated, even by most of his supporters. He was a comparative historian of major importance, who trenchantly analyzed the economic factors behind militarism.

As Flynn saw matters, governments often face a problem owing to the vagaries of the business cycle. Confronted with the mass unemployment and poverty brought about by economic depression, what is to be done? Unless the condition of those disaccommodated can be bettered, popular discontent threatens to overwhelm the ruling authorities; and few rulers wish to cede power.

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The solution that has again and again come to the minds of the rulers is to increase spending. Then, it is hoped, business may revive and all will be well. But the solution leads to new problems, more severe than the difficulties that provoked the initial bout of spending. If government spending is the order of the day, what new projects are to become the beneficiaries of the Treasury's largesse? Justifications for increased spending need constantly to be located. Meanwhile, the burden of new spending and borrowing threatens once more to topple the economy, and with it the government.

Once more the question arises: what is to be done? Flynn contended that the siren song of militarism usually proves irresistible. An arms buildup offers a never-failing outlet for government spending; and the draft of men into the armed services presents a cure for unemployment as well.

Here precisely lies Flynn's greatest contribution to comparative history. He pioneered in the study of domestic pressures that lead to war. Particularly in the brilliant "Militarism: The New Slavery for America," he casts illuminating light on the history of Europe and America in the period from 1870 to 1939.

But Flynn did not do his work in a detached spirit, *sine ira et studio*. Rather, he strongly rejected the militaristic "solution" to economic depression and wrote to warn his countrymen of the disasters that lay ahead should this policy be adopted. In an essay, "Can Hitler Beat American Business?," first published in 1940, he warned: "Economic dislocation, control and more control, national debt, and militarism—these three great facts have now invaded our life" (p. 106).

The strength of Flynn's theory emerges more clearly when its details are examined. Flynn places supreme stress on fractional reserve banking as a cause of instability. He writes, in "The New Deal: An Old Racket," first published in 1955: "A business man wants to borrow $10,000. The bank takes his note. But it does not give him $10,000. It gives him a deposit. It writes in his deposit

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book a statement that he has $10,000 deposited in the bank. By this simple process, the deposits of the bank are increased by $10,000 —though no additional money has actually been deposited" (p. 57; emphasis omitted).

Militarism "was and remains a racket—the oldest in history."

Unlike Murray Rothbard, Flynn did not totally condemn this process. He found "nothing wrong or fraudulent about this" (p. 57). But he was alive to the grave dangers inherent in money thus created; here lay a most potent source of instability. Although he did not work out in detail the causes of the business cycle, Flynn obviously operated in the same neighborhood as the Austrian theory of Mises and Hayek, which places prime responsibility for the cycle on the overexpansion of bank credit.

Flynn's keen insight is evident at another point in his theory, already briefly mentioned: the mechanism by which the search of the government for projects on which to spend money leads to militarism. "We have created a huge national debt to relieve poverty and idleness and produce recovery. With the money we have built schools, hospitals, playgrounds, roads, parkways. But now it is no longer possible to support such expenditures. Powerful resistance has developed. . . . But the spending must go on or the present government will face a collapse. And hence this one great imperious call to national defense is invoked" (p. 105).

Thus Flynn strikes at a key weakness in Keynesian economic policy. Government spending, in Keynes's theory, ostensibly may be on anything. But when the realities of politics are taken into account, the options available prove quite limited. Keynesian policies are apt to lead not to harmless (if useless) public works boondoggles but instead to war and destruction.

At one point Flynn perhaps lays himself open to criticism. When he says that the government *must* continue to spend in order to avert collapse, is Flynn himself endorsing the Keynesian point that spending is necessary to end a depression? I do not think he need be taken in this way. Perhaps what he wishes to claim is that a government that refused to spend but instead allowed the market to operate unhindered would itself face collapse, owing to political exigencies. But Flynn, neither here nor to my knowledge elsewhere, states in a precise way his view of how the market economy in depression operates; and I am here uncertain of his meaning.

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When Flynn submitted an article to *National Review* that warned against militarism and war, the editor returned it to Flynn.

But this is at worst a minor blemish. Flynn is at his superb best in his comparative analysis of the military policies of Germany and Italy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He argues that in Germany, Bismarck inaugurated government planning of the economy in order to steal the Socialists' thunder. "The great German Chancellor decided, after some experimenting, that he could give the German people all that the socialists promised without setting up socialism—a tragic blunder which politicians in America who have not read history seem not to have comprehended to this day" (p. 117).

Conscription into the armed forces formed a vital part of this quasi-socialist program. It provided employment for large numbers of young men, as well as offering a huge outlet for government spending. Militarism, in brief, met perfectly domestic imperatives. And, as the burden of debt mounted, the pressure for war increased concomitantly: "War, the supreme project of obfuscated politicians trapped in impossible promises, in overpowering taxes and crushing debt" (p. 121).

In stressing the domestic imperatives in German policy that led to war in 1914, Flynn anticipated the influential work of Fritz Fischer and his school in Germany. And Flynn developed his account with much more balance than Fischer, who tends to see the European conflict of 1914 as exclusively the result of German aggression.

To Flynn, the pressures of war caused by expansion of debt were a European-wide phenomenon. (Flynn, incidentally, was a considerable authority on German history. One thinks in this connection of his outstanding comparison in *The Road Ahead* of the British and German systems of government in 1914—by no means to the advantage of the former. But this is another story.)

Flynn's eloquent arguments against the entry of the United States into the Second World War were rudely interrupted by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The course of the war confirmed Flynn in the essential correctness of his analysis; and at war's end he renewed the struggle.

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His target now was the Cold War. Though a fervent anti-communist, he warned against a military buildup supposedly designed to contain Stalin and his successors. To impose military socialism at home would not help to defeat communism; rather, it would increase militarism, which "was and remains a racket—the oldest in history" (p. 132), to unprecedented levels.

Simple common sense, one would suppose; but Flynn's classic defense of Old Right thinking was not to the liking of the warmongering editor of the newly founded *National Review*. When Flynn submitted an article to *National Review* that warned against militarism and war, the editor returned it to Flynn. Pavlik quotes in his insightful introduction to this volume from the editor's letter: "This piece just isn't what I had in mind" (p. 4). The editor preferred the interests of the military state to the welfare of the American people. And in the forty years that have passed since that letter, William F. Buckley, Jr., has changed not at all.

The volume contains, besides the essays on militarism, an important early piece, "Whose Child is the NRA?." In this 1934 article, Flynn exposed the business interests who favored subjecting the economy to the straitjacket controls of the New Deal's National Recovery Administration. The later studies of Murray Rothbard fully confirm Flynn's findings. And "What is Senator McCarthy Really Trying to Do?" offers a provocative defense of a figure for whom the right has displayed at best a tepid enthusiasm. *Forgotten Lessons*, if it receives the attention it deserves, will revive interest in a major social thinker. ❖

The Sci-Fi Speaker

TO RENEW AMERICA
Newt Gingrich
Harper Collins, 1995, xii + 260 pp.

To Renew America conveys a vivid sense of its author's unusual personality. But the vital core of the book lies elsewhere. In the guise of a reassertion of American values, Speaker Gingrich prescribes a thoroughly statist agenda.

Our author proposes to confront six challenges that confront contemporary America. Among them are "Creating American Jobs in the World Market," "Balancing the Budget and Saving Social Security and Medicare," and "Decentralizing Power." For each challenge, Gingrich offers his response, often in the form of yet another numbered list. The reader, thus armed

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with an Outline of Wisdom, is next treated to a breathless account of the Speaker's efforts to ram his Contract with America through the House.

But Gingrich is not content with what he and his cohorts have so far done to restore America. He follows the account of the Contract with a further brace of proposals; these leave the reader in no doubt of his ultimate aims.

But before dealing with Mr. Gingrich's proposals, one cannot avoid consideration of Mr. Gingrich himself. He tells us: "At heart, I am still a happy four-year old who gets up every morning hoping to find a cookie that friends or relatives may have left for me somewhere" (p. 245).

The most commonplace ideas and events fill him with glee. As generations of parents have known, small rewards may encourage children to behave. To Gingrich, this offers the key to educational revolution. Do many children end their school years illiterate? Why not pay them to read? "Volunteers visit housing projects once a week and counsel the children in their reading. They then offer the children two dollars for every book they read during the next month" (p. 149).

I do not suggest this idea is silly. Rather, what strikes one as odd is that Gingrich blows it up into something of immense moment. He cannot contain himself. "I am convinced that for 10 percent of the $7 billion now spent on the Federal Title One Reading Program, we could have a revolution in literacy rates among the poor and change standards of acceptable behavior as well" (pp. 150-51). Thus, we have only to give Gingrich and his associates at Earning by Learning a paltry $700 million and he will end illiteracy. Rather a high price for Gingrich to indulge himself in his latest toy, is it not?

As everyone knows, it is technology that most readily arouses Gingrich to yammer. He asks us to "[i]magine a society in which first graders are able to check out their very own laptop as soon as they achieve a minimum standard of reading and writing" (pp. 147-148). (No doubt, a boost from Earning by Learning will help them here.) And the Speaker's technological imperatives are by no means limited to those whose chronological age corresponds to his own emotional level.

Do you sometimes find life without meaning? Gingrich is puzzled: "I am amazed every time I hear reports of teen suicide or stories about people who despair because of boredom or because they have nothing left to look forward to" (p. 189). Do those puzzled by life's meaning not realize the marvels

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that lie ahead? "I believe that space tourism will be a common fact of life during the adulthood of children born this year [1995], that honeymoons in space will be the vogue by 2020" (p. 192).

As one might expect, such science fiction writers as Arthur Clarke and Jerry Pournelle helped to shape his political thinking. And he presses others who do not fit into the same mold. As a teenager, Gingrich came under the sway of Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History*. Amazingly, he treats Toynbee as if he were a proponent of growth through technology in the style of Arthur and Heidi Toffler. He admires Toynbee's "broad sweep" (p. 23) but never stops to notice that Toynbee considers undue emphasis on technology a sign of Western decay.

But to view the book principally as an involuntary revelation of a superficial personality is a mistake. Gingrich has proclaimed himself leader of a Conservative Revolution, and his fantasies threaten to become reality.

Is this not, though, an overly harsh view of the Speaker? How can I term him a dangerous statist, when the President and his camarilla proclaim him a heartless reactionary? Does he not, for example, call for a devolution of power to the states, and, better, to local communities, as every conservative of sound doctrine should?

Gingrich has proclaimed himself leader of a Conservative Revolution, and his fantasies threaten to become reality.

Well, let us look at what he says: "There was certainly some justification for a centralized bureaucratic effort when one-third of the nation was legally segregated. The federal government had to be prepared to intervene to protect minorities from the legal oppression of state and local governments. . . . Today, however, as long as the federal government enforces the basic civil and voting rights (and I approve using the full power of the federal government on both of these issues), it is unnecessary to have a Washington bureaucracy overseeing the actions of honestly elected local officials" (p. 106).

In other words, so long as state and local officials obey orders without prompting from Washington, further federal ukases are unneeded. So much for decentralization.

As Gingrich makes clear, his version of "conservatism" rests on strong government: "This drive to

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decentralize should not be mistaken as a plea for weak government. I strongly favor the Constitution over the Articles of Confederation. The Constitution is a device for strong central government, and so it should remain" (p. 108).

But once more the claim may be raised; have I not been too severe on the Speaker? Perhaps civil rights are for him an exceptional case: could not the strong government he favors be otherwise compatible with the strictly limited state of the standard conservative?

Seizure of property is not confined to drug dealers, in Gingrich's New Jerusalem.

Gingrich's own account provides a full answer. Like his friend William Bennett, he calls for a total war on drugs, the effect of which cannot but be a massive growth in the power of government. Property rights are of small consequence: "If you are a drug dealer, all your assets must be presumed to come from the drug trade unless proved otherwise" (p. 180). As such, they stand subject to confiscation.

Seizure of property is not confined to drug dealers, in Gingrich's New Jerusalem. "I would favor charging a [drug] user 10 percent of their [sic] gross assets for first conviction, 20 percent for second conviction, and 30 percent for third conviction. The first time a baseball player or rock star had to pay a multimillion-dollar fine, drugs would begin to lose their glamour" (p. 180). So much for property, if it gets in the Speaker's way.

Laws that regulate drugs directly affect only part of the American people; laws that deal with the environment concern us all. Under the guise of protecting the environment, the left has subjected the economy to a Draconian set of controls. Does Gingrich, as one would expect of a conservative revolutionary, adamantly oppose these intrusions on the free market? Of course not.

We must protect endangered species: to do so, a "worldwide biological inventory" must be undertaken (p. 198). We must encourage "pro-environmental technologies" (p. 198); our "moral obligation to take care of the ecosystem" (p. 196) imposes clear duties.

Speaker Gingrich, as one would expect of so far-seeing a statesman, does not confine his revolution to the domestic front. Quite the contrary, he knows what is best for us in foreign affairs as well. Here, one

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might think, he is bound more closely to approach a genuine conservative posture. After all, he wishes to balance the budget; and the Cold War has ended. Will he not call for a reduction in military spending and a return to the traditional American policy of non-intervention?

Gingrich, I fear, views the situation in an entirely different way. "The simple fact is that with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire, the need for American leadership has become greater" (p. 187). To rule the world, constant military investment is necessary: the imperative of technological development is indeed a demanding one. We can take heart in our struggles from the achievements of the Gulf War. Superior technology enabled American troops to plow under untold numbers of Iraqis. Who could ask for more?

Faced with views so abhorrent, one naturally asks: how has Gingrich arrived at them? If his program cannot be accepted, does he at least support it with arguments that bear consideration? Our author's manner of reasoning, like his enthusiasms, has not much progressed beyond the bounds of late infancy.

In a chapter on illegal immigration, he writes: "First, anything illegal is by definition wrong. We are opposed to illegal drugs, to illegal violence, to illegal immigration. It is against the law, and it should be stopped" (p. 155). So much for the American Revolution.

Gingrich is not concerned at all with undue immigration: quite the contrary, he supports a liberal immigration policy. It is the *illegality* of the immigration that bothers him: "Anything illegal is by definition wrong." This, I readily acknowledge, has a certain resonance; so let us not mock the Speaker any further. Rather, here is a suggestion that will enable him to achieve his aims more efficiently. Why not declare all immigrants legal? Then, "by definition" we would no longer face the problem of "illegal immigration." How readily may difficult social problems be solved when a devotee of Buck Rogers takes the helm. ❖

The Old South as Exemplar

THE SOUTHERN FRONT: HISTORY AND POLITICS IN THE CULTURAL WAR
Eugene D. Genovese
University of Missouri Press, 1995,
x + 320 pp.

Eugene Genovese is a Marxist historian, but he is a Marxist of a most unusual kind. In this excellent collection of

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essays, he continually advocates conservative views, often expressed more trenchantly than is customary among rightists themselves. A specialist in the history of the American South, he is especially sympathetic to the conservative thinkers of that region.

In "The Slaveholders' Contribution to the American Constitution," he offers a brilliant defense of the Southern strict constructionist interpretation of the Constitution. Contrary to liberal legal theorists like Ronald Dworkin and alleged conservatives like Harry Jaffa, the Constitution does not enshrine a commitment to equality. "Among the shameless pretensions that now inundate us, my personal favorite is the so-called deferred commitment to equality. A product of the imagination of ideologues, it rests on the extraordinary claim that the Declaration of Independence should be considered part of the Constitution—a claim made popular by the abolitionists, sanctified by Abraham Lincoln, and now happily promoted by the media. If the Founders had intended any such thing, they would have said so" (p. 115).

And the Declaration of Independence itself does not promulgate equality as this is understood by contemporary leftists. "The rights of the individual, to the extent considered, were defined within particular corporate structures, to which submission was required. The rights asserted were, first and foremost, the rights of historically evolved communities to which all individuals owed loyalty and obedience" (p. 121).

In the Southern view, preservation of inherited liberties depended on a strictly limited central government. Thus, Genovese maintains, the Bill of Rights limits Congress, not the states. The "much-touted" First Amendment, for example, does not bar the states from supporting religious institutions. "The recent Supreme Court decisions that have tried to legislate a wholly secular society have no foundation . . . in the Constitution that was written, ratified, and accepted by public opinion for more than a century" (p. 122).

One may readily imagine how leftists would respond to Genovese. Was not the Southern defense of states' rights merely transparent apologetics for slavery? Genovese does not support slavery; indeed, he thinks it is a fundamental failing of the Southern thinkers he admires that they failed adequately to confront its evils. But he never makes the mistake of reducing ideas to the class interests they represent. In his review of Larry Tise's *Proslavery*, he criticizes the "idealist method"

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and tells us that arguments must be analyzed in their social context (p. 84). This does not prevent him from taking the ideas of antebellum Southerners with complete seriousness.

Genovese never makes the mistake of reducing ideas to the class interests they represent.

Among Genovese's essays on Southern intellectuals, I found especially compelling his account of James Henry Thornwell, a Presbyterian theologian from South Carolina. Thornwell met head on the assaults by abolitionists on slavery. He argued (successfully in Genovese's opinion) that the Bible permits slavery. One may condemn ill-treatment of slaves, or call for reform, as Thornwell did; but how can a Christian hold immoral an institution that the Bible allows? To do so is to open the way for unchecked private conscience to replace Biblical authority. If God and the Bible are neglected, Thornwell held, the foundation is laid "for the worst of all possible forms of government—a democratic absolutism" (p. 39). Once more, Genovese obviously does not agree with Thornwell's position: he is not a Calvinist and defender of slavery but an atheist and Marxist. But he treats Thornwell with the utmost respect.

On the strength of Genovese's recommendation, I read a volume of Thornwell's *Collected Writings*. Genovese seems to me entirely right in his high estimate of Thornwell, who pursues an argument with relentless logic. I suspect that Genovese, himself an ardent polemicist, finds this "hyper-hyper-hyper high Presbyterian," as Charles Hodge called him, a kindred spirit. (In passing, Genovese suggests that Thornwell's "Relation of the State to Christ" influenced T.S. Eliot's "The Idea of a Christian Society" [p. 40]).

Genovese's strong interest in religion emerges in the volume many times. He especially finds wisdom in the Christian doctrine of original sin. He scorns liberal theology: "Liberal, not to mention liberationist, theology, whether in white or black, should warm every atheist's heart. . . . If God is finite, progressive, and Pure Love, we may as well skip church next Sunday and go to the movies" (p. 169).

Genovese's comments on Christianity reflect a wide knowledge of theology. In his long essay "The Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Its Political Implications," he criticizes King's professors for

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failing to note the changes in Karl Barth's theology after the appearance of the second edition of his *Epistle to the Romans* (p. 177). Elsewhere, he rightly praises Nancey Murphy's excellent *Theology in the Age of Scientific Reasoning* (p. 9), as well as John Crowe Ransom's *God Without Thunder* (pp. 168–169).

The keen evocation of Mel Bradford's personality will delight anyone who knew Bradford and instruct those who did not.

Although an admirer of King, Genovese faces the issue of King's plagiarism with characteristic forthrightness. "The scandal of King's well-documented plagiarism reveals only part of an even greater scandal of an academic career that will not bear scrutiny. Theodore Pappas has chronicled that scandal and the even worse scandal of the reaction of the media and Academia in *The Martin Luther King, Jr., Plagiarism Story*, which deserves more attention than it has been getting" (p. 172).

On a few points, I venture to disagree with Genovese's theological interpretations. He seems to me to accept uncritically Hans von Balthasar's thesis of a movement from dialectics to analogy in Barth's theology (p. 177). Murphy's book does indeed claim that theology uses probable reasoning, but it tests theology through Lakatos's Methodology of Scientific Research Programs, not probability theory (p. 9). The "Given" in the system of Edgar Brightman is not prior to God, but part of Him (p. 168). But these are minor matters.

Genovese respects not only the Old South, but present-day Southern conservatives as well. I found especially moving his tribute to the late M.E. Bradford: "Notwithstanding deep philosophical and political differences, I counted Bradford a dear friend and as fine a human being as it has ever been my privilege to know" (p. 258). He finds in Bradford "an almost unerring instinct for the essentials. He posed and faced the hard questions and rarely if ever wrote a page that did not contain valuable insights" (p. 258). His keen evocation of Mel Bradford's personality will delight anyone who knew Bradford and instruct those who did not.

Our author shows full awareness of the problems of Marxism. In the book's most controversial essay, "The Question," Genovese indicts his fellow Marxists for condoning Communist atrocities and pleads

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guilty to the failing himself: "What did we know, and when did we know it? We knew everything essential and knew it from the beginning" (p. 296). And mass murder was no aberration, but stemmed from deep flaws internal to Marxism. "Our whole project of 'human liberation' has rested on a series of gigantic illusions" (p. 298). In another essay, he finds "too much truth for comfort" in Eric Voegelin's identification of the leftist worldview as a variety of gnosticism (p. 13).

After reading the volume, readers may well be puzzled why Genovese remains a Marxist. That he remains one admits of no doubt. He selects as the book's epigraph exactly the passage from Dante of which Marx said in *Capital*: "The maxim of the great Florentine is mine." In a laudatory essay on Herbert Aptheker, he refers to the "family quarrel that I have with Aptheker and other Marxists" (p. 215).

I suspect that, in part, Genovese's continued Marxism stems from his finding plausible Marx's analysis of capitalism. In an essay on Sam Francis, he refers to "capitalism's inherent tendency toward the concentration of capital in which the most dynamic entrepreneurs are generally the most socially destructive" (p. 268). I hope that Genovese will reexamine Marx's economics in the same critical spirit that he elsewhere so admirably displays. If he does so, I think he will find Marx's arguments "utterly rotten."

Genovese's firm and muscular style conveys his enormous intellectual energy and his impatience with nonsense, from whatever source derived.[1] I wish there were more Marxists like him. ❖

Neither Content Nor Character

THE END OF RACISM: PRINCIPLES FOR A MULTIRACIAL SOCIETY
Dinesh D'Souza
The Free Press, 1995, xi + 724 pp.

D'Souza's massive tome is structured by a simple message. Relations between whites and blacks in the contemporary United States are deep in crisis, but a way out exists. The crisis stems from the practices of large numbers of blacks, whose lives D'Souza describes in scathing terms that have already led to accusations of racism against him.

What prevents adequate measures to deal with such problems as

[1]One quibble about usage—Genovese constantly writes "alternate" when the sense requires "alternative."

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crime, drug use, and illiteracy in the black community? D'Souza locates a surprising villain: cultural relativism. This doctrine, taught by the early twentieth-century anthropologist Franz Boas and his many disciples at Columbia University, holds that cultures cannot be ranked as superior or inferior. Values are relative to culture rather than universal, and all cultures are in essence equal.

The doctrine arose as a salutary reaction to racism, an ideology of racial superiority that D'Souza maintains began in Enlightened Europe. But continued adherence to it now has calamitous consequences. If all cultures are equal, blacks should do as well economically and socially as whites. Since they do not, discrimination must be at fault.

Hence, the merit principle, on which a free society rests, has been abandoned in favor of quotas. Further, measures cannot be taken to combat the deleterious practices of the black community. To do so would imply that these practices are bad, and this cultural relativism forbids. Owing to these practices, racism has in some circles made a comeback; but this view ought to be rejected. Thoroughly dispose of cultural relativism, and all will be well.

I have so far described D'Souza's thesis in (I hope) neutral terms. This I have done with great difficulty, and I now cast neutrality to the winds. The book is utterly bad, one of the worst I have read in many years. Its principal arguments fail, but that is the least of its problems. D'Souza's level of inaccuracy and the incompetence of his arguments are staggering.

Let us first have a look at D'Souza as historian. He devotes one section of the book to the controversy over whether all humans form part of the same species. He informs us that the "polygenist position [the view that humans consist of more than one species] gathered strength in the early nineteenth century. . . . Moreover, European freethinkers such as Voltaire, Saint-Simon, and Giordano Bruno seized on the idea of separate creation and intrinsic black inferiority as a polemical weapon against the Christian churches" (p. 125). It is a bit difficult to fathom why Bruno is listed as an early nineteenth century thinker: he was burned at the stake in 1600. At least with Voltaire, who died in 1778, D'Souza is not so far off. Henry Home, who adopted the judicial title Lord Kames, becomes "Henry Homer Kames" (p. 125).

A few pages later, D'Souza informs us: "The controversy between monogenists and polygenists was settled in favor of the former with the publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*" (p. 128). Really?

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The Origin of Species does not discuss human evolution at all. It is quite true that Darwin wrote with favor of monogenesis in *The Descent of Man*; but why does D'Souza think that Darwin's discussion settled the issue? One of D'Souza's sources, George Stocking's *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, argues that it did not: has D'Souza read his own source? And if D'Souza thinks that the controversy was settled in the nineteenth century, why does he later remark: "it is no longer clear that all human beings have a recent shared origin. In a fascinating revival of polygenism, the 'Eve' hypothesis has been strongly contested by what scientists call the 'candelabra' hypothesis which holds that the races may have evolved separately" (p. 467)?

I fear that the history of biology is not D'Souza's strong suit. He states: "Darwin showed that evolution occurred not through the inheritance of acquired traits but through the elimination of the unfit" (p. 129). Not quite; Darwin thought natural selection the main mechanism of evolution, but inheritance of acquired characters is an explicit part of his account. D'Souza is even unable to state correctly the subtitle of the *Origin of Species*.

Haeckel's biogenetic law, a principle of embryology, is, incredibly, taken to hold "that the development of children from infancy through adolescence to maturity directly parallels the development of societies from primitivism through barbarism to civilization" (p. 133). On the same page, he includes Houston Stewart Chamberlain, an Englishman who became a naturalized German, in a list of fevered nativists concerned with restricting immigration to the United States.

The book is utterly bad, one of the worst I have read in many years. Its principal arguments fail, but that is the least of its problems.

Have I unfairly picked out for abuse a few atypical pages? Not at all; D'Souza's ineptitude is wide-ranging. He states: "Although Hobbes argued for absolute monarchy, his philosophy broke with the ancients in asserting that the wisdom of the king is only legitimate when it is ratified by the consent of the governed; all else is tyranny" (p. 104). Just the opposite; those who enter the social contract agree

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to obey the sovereign unconditionally.

Locke fares little better: "As Locke and Hobbes have it, man enters into a social contract in which he exchanges his natural rights for civil rights" (p. 535). No; in Locke, one gives up the right to enforce the law of nature, not one's natural rights.

D'Souza has a remarkable penchant for getting things exactly backwards.

According to our author, Herbert Spencer argued "that promises of human rights and equality were absurd attempts to regulate the laws of evolution that would end up restricting human progress" (p. 133). Has D'Souza even glanced at *Social Statics* or *The Principles of Ethics*? The basis of Spencer's ethics is his "law of equal freedom."

D'Souza has a remarkable penchant for getting things exactly backwards. Another instance—he writes: "Justice Taney's argument in *Dred Scott*, that the American founders were hypocrites who produced a pro-slavery regime . . . rests on the apparent contradiction between stated ideals and actual practice [of slave holding] . . . This is the force behind Taney's insistence that these men could not have meant what they said" (p. 107). But Taney's argument is (in part) that since the founders were *not* hypocrites, the equality clause does not accord equal rights to slaves.

So much for D'Souza as historian. Let us watch him as he dons the mantle of philosophy. Cultural relativism, his main target, must be refuted. Contrary to the relativists, there may well be ethical truths "Western in origin but universal in their application" (p. 385). In reply, the relativist will probably invoke the fact-value distinction. "According to this view . . . we can through scientific techniques know facts, but we have no rational basis for preferring the values of one culture (or individual) to those of another. Yet the fact-value distinction also contains serious problems. Is the distinction itself a fact or a value? If it is a value, then we must conclude that it is arbitrary and there is no scientific basis for believing it" (p. 385). And what happens if the distinction is a fact? D'Souza's argument at once collapses.

D'Souza's own view of ethics is incoherent. He asks us not "to dismiss the possibility that political or moral propositions may be considered as permanent and universal (although not necessarily absolute) truths" (p. 386). How can

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a truth be permanent and universal without being absolute?

But what of D'Souza's central argument? No doubt the failings of Boas's cultural relativism are many, but I do not think that contemporary racial problems can be blamed on its adoption. The doctrine, first, has to do with comparisons among different societies: it rules out judging a society by the values of another. Yet nothing prevents a cultural relativist from saying that in our society, high crime rates and illegitimacy are bad.

Further, cultural relativism does not imply trait relativism —the view that no trait of any culture may be judged by other than its own standards. A cultural relativist can consistently maintain, for example, that Aztec human sacrifice is objectively bad, so long as he thinks that Aztec culture as a whole cannot be rated better or worse than others.[1] To get the consequences D'Souza wants, one would have to adopt trait relativism and then widen it so that it applies to groups within a society. Then, indeed, one would be blocked from saying that high rates of crime among blacks are bad. But who holds so implausible a view?

And even if someone did hold the extreme version of group-trait relativism just sketched, D'Souza's argument would still fail. Relativism is a position about ethics: it does not prevent anyone from holding that those who practice certain forms of behavior will be apt to have low incomes, or suffer other disabilities. How then does cultural relativism prevent anyone from seeking change in the black community?

In spite of his very negative characterization of many blacks, D'Souza insists that he is not a racist. What better way to show this than to find scholars of note that he can stigmatize as racists, and then condemn them? How then can critics possibly accuse D'Souza of racism? Does he not denounce racists?

The tactic is a clever one, but by this point in his analysis, there is nothing left of the author's credibility. The "racists" he elects to condemn—Jared Taylor, Samuel Francis, and Michael Levin—are, unlike D'Souza, meticulous journalists and serious scholars of remarkable intelligence. I have been told that D'Souza's account of them had to be amended at the last minute in order to avert legal action, and I regret that the many other thinkers he misrepresents do not have access to the courts. I hope that D'Souza's effort to extend the boundaries of human stupidity does no further damage. ❖

[1] I owe this point about trait relativism to Robert Nozick.

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Why the Austrian School is Austrian

AUSTRIAN PHILOSOPHY:
THE LEGACY OF FRANZ BRENTANO
Barry Smith
Open Court, 1994, xii + 381 pgs.

As any reader in the tradition will know, Austrian economics has deep links to philosophy. To understand the philosophical background out of which the Austrian School emerged is essential to a grasp of the School's doctrine. Barry Smith, in his exhaustively researched and carefully argued book, has done more than any other scholar to elucidate that background.

Lenin once observed that one cannot understand Marx without studying Hegel's *Logic*. After reading Smith, we can say: one cannot fully understand Mises without knowing something about Franz Brentano.

In Smith's view, Brentano inaugurated an approach to philosophy that became influential in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Brentano's style of philosophy broke sharply with that prevailing in Germany, where the idealist philosophy of Kant and his successors held sway.

The "strength of idealist metaphysics had derived in no small part from the fact that it was closely associated with the development both of German national consciousness and of the German nation itself, so that Kant, Hegel, Fichte, and Schelling have come to occupy an entrenched position in German thought and feeling of a sort that is unparalleled in any other culture" (p. 13).

Philosophers in Kant's tradition tended to concentrate heavily on the theory of knowledge. Human beings have no direct knowledge of the world as it exists in itself. Instead, the mind (also unknowable in itself) imposes categories on reality. Given this view, Smith argues, it is hardly surprising that German philosophy developed independently of the work of scientists. Stress on the "ultimate unintelligibility of the world is often inimical to scientific theory" (p. 4).

Defenders of Kant might contend that he in fact did allow knowledge of the real world. J.N. Findlay has made a case for this view in *Kant and the Transcendental Object*. And if Kant exalted epistemology, Hegel argued strongly against its primacy. But Smith is certainly right that many in Germany read Kant in exactly the way he describes.

Even more important, in my view, is Smith's remark that the

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"main currents of German philosophy . . . have tended to strive for philosophical *depth*, often at the expense of clarity, which they have associated with shallowness of thinking" (p. 4).

After reading Smith, we can say: one cannot fully understand Mises without knowing something about Franz Brentano.

Franz Brentano, who taught at the University of Vienna for twenty years, conceived of philosophy in an entirely different way. In his view, philosophy should be carried out in a rigorously scientific manner. Against the neo-Kantians, those in the tradition of Brentano think that "we can know what the world is like both in its individual and in its general aspect, and our knowledge will likely manifest a progressive improvement, both in depth of penetration and in adequacy to the structures penetrated" (p. 323).

We can, if this view is right, know reality as it is in itself. But how do Brentano and his successors prove that we have such knowledge? This question, however natural to ask, is in the Austrian view radically misconceived. We do not have to prove that we know the world: for Brentano, the problem of skepticism is not of prime importance.

Instead, the nature of the world is "read off" directly, using both external observation and introspection. Not only is it held that we know the actual world: sometimes, just by operating in a commonsense way, we can see how the world must be.

Here there is a precise parallel with the views of Carl Menger about economics; and this parallel is, as the Trotskyists would say, "no accident." "There are, he [Menger] holds, certain simple economic categories which are *universal* . . . and which are capable of being grasped as such by the economic theorist. Propositions expressing the relations among such categories are called by Menger 'exact laws'" (p. 301).

Ludwig von Mises also maintained that economics grasps *a priori* truths; but, under neo-Kantian influence, he took these truths to be purely logical implications of the concept of action, rather than perceived necessities in the world. Smith boldly contends that Mises misdescribed his own practice. The laws of praxeology are *not*, as Mises sometimes described them, tautologies. Mises operated in a

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fashion that the Brentanist tradition enables us to understand better than he himself did.

Smith seems to me on firm ground here; and I venture one point as a supplement, though I fear it so obvious as hardly to be worth stating. Mises often described the propositions of economics as "synthetic *a priori*"; but a proposition can hardly be both a tautology and synthetic. I suspect that Mises did not write on these issues from a fixed philosophical standpoint. Smith's analysis, further, is entirely in accord with the views and practices of Murray Rothbard.

Everyone interested in the Austrian School needs to study thoroughly this outstanding book.

Smith again and again makes illuminating remarks about Austrian methodology. He rejects the attempt by several recent writers to connect Austrian economics with the problem of interpretation studied by hermeneutics. Claims of this sort are "quite astonishing" and reflect a "muddled confounding of the distinct intellectual traditions of Austria and Germany" (p. 320 n. 21).

Smith's treatment of the *a priori* is a model of clarity. At only one point in it am I inclined to dissent. Against Kantians and positivists who take *a priori* truths to be entirely imposed by the mind, Smith directs this argument: "Imagine that the totality of all laws or propositions is laid out before us. Is it to be completely arbitrary which of these laws or propositions are to enjoy the 'imposed' quality of aprioricity? A positive answer . . . is belied by the extent to which there is wide agreement across times and cultures as to which the candidate *a priori* laws or propositions might be. A negative answer, on the other hand, implies that there is some non-arbitrary quality on the side of certain laws or propositions themselves, in virtue of which precisely those laws or propositions do indeed serve as the targets of imposition" (p. 310).

I think that the positivist has an escape. He can grant that there is a real quality possessed by the propositions that people take to be *a priori*. This quality, he may concede, is not imposed by the mind. But why need it make these propositions *a priori* true in a stronger sense than the conventional? What if, for example, evolutionary pressures lead people to regard some truths as *a priori*?

At this point I fear I must be grossly unfair to Smith. The bulk of his book is devoted to a painstaking elaboration of the views of

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Brentano and several of his followers. He presents, for example, a brilliantly illuminating discussion of the correspondence theory of truth, as developed by Anton Marty (pp. 113–119. He calls this section "The Martian Theory of Truth"). And he carefully expounds Brentano's often misunderstood view of intentionality (pp. 42–45).

Unfortunately, a detailed discussion of these and other points far exceeds the scope of *The Mises Review*, and my abilities as well. But I think that if, say, you are seriously interested in learning the differences between Brentano's and Kotarbinski's doctrines of reism, you need no help from me and can consult the book directly.

Everyone interested in the Austrian School needs to study thoroughly this outstanding book, at the very least the Introduction and the Chapters "Austrian Philosophy and the Brentano School" and "Carl Menger: On Austrian Philosophy and Austrian Economics." ❖

Subscription: $16 for four issues.

Who We Are; Why it Matters

THE NEXT AMERICAN NATION: THE NEW NATIONALISM AND THE FOURTH AMERICAN REVOLUTION
Michael Lind
The Free Press, 1995, vii + 436 pp.

Michael Lind's book contains one excellent idea, and several well worth discussion. But these are enmeshed in a bizarre collection of arbitrary assertions. Lind thinks in pictures, and the products of his hyperactive imagination here take the place of argument.

Lind effectively challenges the historical basis of a view about America held by "universalists" like Ben Wattenberg. In their opinion, America is not a nation in the traditional sense: it need not consist of specific ethnic or linguistic groups. Rather, the people of the United States are unified by their acceptance of common ideas. The universalists look to Lincoln's reference in the Gettysburg Address to a "nation dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

Against them, Lind maintains: "A nation may be *dedicated* to a proposition, but it cannot *be* a proposition—this is the central insight of

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Lind raises historical points to undermine the universalists, but he leaves himself completely vulnerable to a "so what?" response.

American nationalism, the doctrine that is the major alternative to multiculturalism and democratic universalism. To the question, *Are we a nation*? the American nationalist answers with a resounding and unequivocal Yes" (p. 5, emphasis in original).

As the universalists whom Lind opposes conceive of things, acceptance of a certain set of propositions suffices for membership in the American polity. Unlike citizens of other nations, Americans need share no common culture. "The United States, according to universalists, is not a nation-state at all, but an idea-state, a nationless state based on the philosophy of liberal democracy in the abstract" (p. 3).

Lind convincingly shows that the American republic was not founded on these views. During the period 1789 to 1861, which Lind terms Anglo-America, the American people were overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon in origin; blacks, of course, constituted the biggest exception. White supremacy was the unquestioned presupposition of politics, as much in the North as in the slave-holding South. Thomas Jefferson's statement in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal" did not interfere with his vigorous adherence to, and promotion of, Anglo-Saxon hegemony.

Both Jefferson and Madison looked with favor on schemes to repatriate blacks to Africa; ideally, they had no place in a white commonwealth. Although some of the Founding Fathers, such as Alexander Hamilton (whom Lind much prefers to Jefferson) held somewhat more liberal views, none brought white hegemony into question. Even Abraham Lincoln, the universalist demigod, favored black emigration. "Shrewd Republicans like Seward and Lincoln saw the need to fuse the Whig national-development program with the kind of pan-white racism that had traditionally been a monopoly of the Democrats" (p. 51).

And white dominance did not abate during what Lind terms the period of Euro-America (1875-1957). As immigration from Europe grew, the ethnic basis of the nation became extended from Anglo-Saxons to European whites as a whole. "White working-class racism was critical for the structure of white supremacy, which in turn was a central element of the second republic of the United States [the period of

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Euro-America]" (p. 64). Whites of various backgrounds might become Americans through acceptance of a common way of life. But the "melting pot" beloved of Theodore Roosevelt, a great favorite of our author, was for whites only. Blacks were still "hewers of wood and drawers of water," and Asians faced discrimination or total exclusion.

Lind writes not as an advocate of white supremacy—quite the contrary. Instead, he raises his historical points in order to undermine the universalists. To what extent is he successful? He has proved to the hilt his thesis of white hegemony during most of American history. I found especially insightful his portrayal of Jefferson. "Bizarre as the idea seems today, for an Anglo-American like Jefferson, the American War of Independence was part of a greater historic effort by Anglo-Saxons . . . to restore the ancient constitution of the Saxon race" (p. 354: Lind could have here strengthened his case even further by reference to J.G. Pocock's *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law*).

But gaps in his argument undermine his assault on the universalists; if he fills these gaps, his argument threatens on other grounds to collapse. Suppose a universalist replied to Lind in this way: "Granted you are right that in the past America has been an ethnic nation; why should that matter now?" Lind might respond in two ways. First, he might raise an argument from tradition: the fact that America has been an ethnic nation itself gives reason to preserve it as one. Second, he might claim that a nation cannot exist at all, or at least not as well, absent a unified race and culture. Such are lessons of history.

Aside from a few stabs in the direction of the second suggested argument, Lind essays neither course, nor does he offer some other response I have failed to imagine. He leaves himself completely vulnerable to a "so what?" response; he appears to think that his vivid depiction of the past suffices to dispatch his universalist opponents. But, if I may be allowed to reiterate what seems to me a vital point: why does a description of the past, *with no further premises added*, dictate what should now be done?

And there is yet another gap in Lind's argument. Suppose that he is right that a nation cannot exist without a common race and culture. Then, his universalist adversaries must exit the scene: in thinking that a nation can subsist entirely on a shared set of beliefs, they err. Lind must now meet the challenge of another group he opposes: those who reject nationalism altogether. Multiculturalists do not, like universalists, postulate a new non-ethnic vision of the American nation. Instead, they wish each ethnic group to concentrate on its own members. They might say to Lind:

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"If a nation as you characterize it does not exist, what of it? You appear to be arguing from definition: you say a nation consists of thus and so; lacking the listed ingredients, there is no nation. But you have given us no reason why we should care about this."

Lind's principal response to the multiculturalists deals with a point of fact: he contends that they have underestimated the extent of cultural unity that now exists in the United States. (He has another argument against them, but this will concern us later.) Even if Lind is right, he has not made good his case: He still needs to show that nations as he conceives of them should be maintained. Lind utterly fails to see the need to set out some sort of justification for what he wants: for him, a description of what is or has been suffices to tell us what should be.[1]

But let us for a moment set aside the multiculturalists and confine the discussion to nationalists. What if Lind's argument were supplemented in the ways I have suggested? That is to say, let us assume that he *can* show that the United States ought to be an ethnic nation.

[1]It might be claimed that I here assume without argument that the fact-value dichotomy holds. Not at all—I ask only that if certain descriptive statements are held to justify normative claims, some explanation be offered of how they do so.

Then, Lind would have to face a challenge from another group he opposes, whom he terms "nativists." They maintain that Lind is insufficiently nationalistic and believe that America is, and ought to remain, controlled by its white majority. Could this group not deploy against Lind exactly the same arguments he uses against his universalist and multiculturalist opponents?

Thus, Lind contends that a nation rests on a distinct ethnic group. But, on his own showing, for the great part of its history America has been under the dominance of men of European heritage. Adhering strictly to nationalist principles, should one not support the nativists as against the mixed-race state with a common culture that Lind favors? Is not Lind a modified universalist, who substitutes his own ideology for the firm ground of race? Lind's argument threatens to undermine itself.

I intend the foregoing remarks, not as a defense of either universalism or nativism, but as a criticism of Lind's failure to argue for his views. Too often, he merely announces his own preferences, as if a list of his likes and dislikes gives reason for others to conform. Lind is an extraordinarily *willful* writer; and this flaw pervades his book.

Thus, he contends that America is today dominated by a white overclass, which "is the child of the former Northeastern Protestant

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establishment, produced by marriage (not only figurative but literal) with the upwardly mobile descendants of turn-of-the-century European immigrants and white Southerners and Westerners" (p. 143). This group, the first truly national overclass, holds most of the positions in the "institutional elite." To promote the interests of its members, the overclass supports multiculturalist movements among minorities and favors affirmative action and racial quotas.

He merely announces his own preferences, as if a list of his likes and dislikes gives reason for others to conform.

In doing so, the overclass acts with great cunning. Support for affirmative action is but a new version of *divide et impera*: Minorities caught up in their own particularisms are blocked from a united struggle against the overclass.

Lind has come up with an interesting hypothesis, but his willfulness once more betrays him. To make his case, Lind needs to show that the overclass acts to secure its own interests, at the expense of the good of the majority. And this is exactly what he does contend. The overclass supports a reduction in taxes on the rich, as well as such nefarious ideas as free trade, private schools, and reductions in social welfare programs.

Here the fatal flaw is manifest. Lind of course needs to argue at this point that the policies mentioned, which comprise what he terms "the revolution of the rich," do indeed benefit the rich at the expense of the poor. He utterly fails to do so.

The issue I wish to stress here is not that his economic policies seem to me dismally wrong: it is hardly a surprise that the socialistic policies he endorses do not find favor at *The Mises Review*. It is rather that he fails to see the need to present reasoned justification for his views. He does not prefer Keynes to Mises (bad enough though that would be); he fails to confront the theories of any economist at all.

Once the class interests of a position have been unmasked, that is enough for our author. Thus, the arguments of Schumpeter against the welfare state need not be met; it is enough to lump him among "the callous masterminds of laissez-faire economics" (p. 203). He declares himself a pragmatist in economics, which I am afraid means someone who does not think at all.

I noted a few mistakes: Thomas Paine was not an atheist (p. 32); the Illuminati were not "a branch of

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Freemasonry" (p. 32), though indeed most members of the Illuminati were also Masons; and the validity of Ricardo's theorem of comparative advantage does not rest on the "iron law of wages" (p. 203). But the failing of this book does not mainly lie in Lind's history. He has an excellent historical imagination. But he has little idea of what an argument is, or how to construct one. ❖

When All Else Fails . . .

"God and Man in Court"
Lino A. Graglia
"Graglia's Quarrel with God"
Harry Jaffa
National Review, Volume 47, No. 15 (August 14, 1995) pp. 27–32

Lino Graglia, a distinguished constitutional lawyer at the University of Texas, has had it up to here with Harry Jaffa. A professed opponent of judicial activism, Jaffa in fact gives judges *carte blanche* to read their personal views of morality into law. He does so by claiming that the Constitution incorporates the Declaration of Independence. And in the Declaration's equality clause is contained, somehow, Jaffa's conception of natural law.

Graglia notes that "Jaffa has not produced a single statement by anyone at the Constitutional Convention or during the ratification debates indicating an intention or understanding that the Declaration was incorporated and thereby made judge-enforceable law" (p. 28). And even if the Declaration had been incorporated, no generally accepted codification of natural law exists. Only arbitrariness—and hearty laughs—can result from a Jaffaite natural law approach.

Only arbitrariness—and hearty laughs—can result from a Jaffaite natural law approach.

Jaffa, of course, cannot cope with Graglia's surgical strike. His reply is not worth reading, except for one item. The Constitution ends "Done in convention . . . in the year of our Lord . . . and of the independence of the United States of America . . ." Jaffa states: the "dual dating links the origin of Christianity with the origin of the United States. What the Gospels were to Christianity, the Declaration of Independence was to the *novus ordo seclorum*" (p. 31). As Oscar Wilde said about the death of Little Nell, "one must have a heart of stone to read this without laughing." ❖

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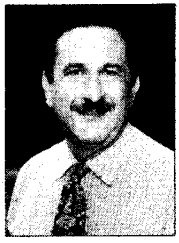

David Gordon, who writes *The Mises Review*, is a senior fellow at the Ludwig von Mises Institute. He was educated at UCLA, where he earned his PhD in intellectual history, and is the author of *Resurrecting Marx: The Analytical Marxists on Exploitation, Freedom, and Justice*; *The Philosophical Foundations of Austrian Economics*; and *Critics of Marx*. He is also co-editor of H.B. Acton's *Morals of Markets and Other Essays* and a contributor to such journals as *Analysis*, *The International Philosophic Quarterly*, *The Journal of Libertarian Studies*, and *The Review of Austrian Economics*.

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